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## Editorial: Diversifying Hollywood is in the hands of the consumers

Liz Theriault

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## Editorial



Liz Theriault (<https://mainecampus.com/author/ltheriault/>)

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"Once you overcome the 1-inch-tall barrier of subtitles, you will be introduced to so many more amazing films," Bong Joon-Ho said, calling out the cultural shortsightedness that plagues Hollywood, in his 2020 Golden Globe acceptance speech for his film "Parasite." His words rang true for minorities everywhere, who sat through yet another award show celebrating predominantly white men.

"Parasite" won in the category Best Foreign-Language Film, after collecting more than \$23 million in the U.S. box office. Despite its success, much of America's film and television consumers still hold a distaste for subtitles, and, by proxy, films led, written or directed by minorities. And even though "Parasite" won a Golden Globe, categories such as "Best Foreign-Language Film" often serve as consolation prizes to keep certain types of films in the margins and outskirts of Hollywood success.

This is evident in how in the 91-year-long history of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, only 11 non-English speaking films have been nominated for Best Picture, and none have ever won.

The UCLA College Division of Social Science releases an annual Hollywood Diversity Report, which examines race, gender, sexuality and ethnic-minority-representation in film and television media. In 2019, the Hollywood Diversity Report found that both people of color and women remain underrepresented in every category of industry employment, including film leads, film directors, broadcast, scripted and reality show leads as well as cable and digital scripted and reality show creators. Each category remains dominated by white men, who represent some of the entrenched cultural stereotypes Hollywood needs to shake.

The internet was host to an uproar after the announcements of the 2020 Golden Globe award candidates revealed yet another all-male line up for consideration of Best Director, seemingly snubbing Greta Gerwig, who many expected to see on the list for her work directing "Little Women." The categories of Best Screenplay and Best Motion Pictures also did not hold a spot for any films directed by women.

This announcement seemed to coincide perfectly with the historical evidence that women-directed films are often overlooked by Hollywood. Female representation has increased on the screen, but top-grossing films are still seeing a lack of female directors. Only 4% of the top 1,100 studio films of the past decade were directed by women. Only a total of three films were directed by women of color.

When women aren't allowed access to the platform that allows them to tell their stories, films portray less genuine and candid representations of what womanhood really is. Yet Hollywood is not the only institution to blame. Society as a whole also needs to be held accountable for its tendency to favor what it has known for so long now — films led, written and directed by white men.

The Hollywood Diversity Report also found that in 2016-17, films with minority leads decreased in representation at the Oscars compared to other years, and films with the most racially and ethnically homogenous casts were the poorest performers in terms of 2016-17 box office revenue. This is no coincidence. Many award programs often defend their nomination choices by stating they choose films based on their success. If Americans are not watching diverse films or streaming diverse shows, the possibility for success falls away for media that bring race, gender, sexuality and ethnic diversity to the screen.

But the progress that has been made deserves to be recognized. At the 2020 Golden Globes, Asian American actress Awkwafina made history with her win for best actress in a musical or comedy. The actress won for her role in "The Farewell," where she plays the role of a young woman of a Chinese family that is attempting to hide the fact that she has cancer from her grandmother.

Television also made history with the recent addition of Bowen Yang to the cast of Saturday Night Live. Yang is the first Chinese-American cast member, and one of the first openly gay cast members, along with Kate McKinnon.

These new levels of representation are so important, as consumers of media often take valuable lessons and shape their versions of reality off of what they see presented to them on the screen. If diverse Americans do not see themselves represented in television or film, it limits the roles and stories they see themselves possibly pursuing in their real lives.

To break this cycle of underrepresented or awarded films and shows, both Hollywood and society need to start actively seeking out new content creators, artists, producers, directors, actors and actresses who bring diverse stories to the screen. As America diversifies, there is no shortage of talented women, people of color, and LGBTQ performers, directors, writers and producers that can bring to life the stories of all Americans.

As Joon-Ho stated, the separation between so many Americans and an entirely new world of important media is a 1-inch-thick barrier of subtitles. Break down that barrier by seeking out diverse films and shows, supporting diverse artists and remembering that white, English-speaking humans are not the only ones with relatable and resounding stories to tell.



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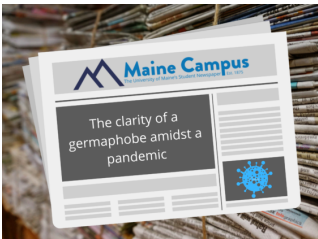




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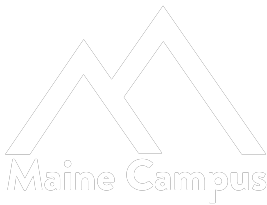
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